

Acts 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales:
and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Analysis

Scales Falling Imagery: The phrase "as it had been scales" (hōs lepidēs) uses fish-scale imagery to describe what fell from Paul's eyes at the moment of healing. The Greek lepis specifically refers to fish scales or scale-like flakes. Whether literal physical scales (perhaps caused by the intense light of Christ's glory) or metaphorical description, the imagery powerfully emphasizes the removal of blindness and the restoration of both physical and spiritual sight.

Immediate Response: The word "immediately" (parachrēma) appears nine times in Acts, emphasizing instantaneous, sudden divine action without delay. Paul "received sight forthwith" (aneblepsen), where the Greek verb suggests both looking up and recovering sight simultaneously. The response sequence—sight restored, arose, and was baptized—demonstrates Paul's immediate obedience and public identification with Christ and His church. Baptism here serves as the outward, visible sign of the inward transformation that occurred on the Damascus road three days earlier. The rapidity of these events underscores the completeness of Paul's conversion: spiritual sight granted, physical healing accomplished, and covenant identification publicly displayed, all occurring in quick succession through direct divine intervention and the ministry of Ananias.

Historical Context

This event occurred circa 34-35 AD in Damascus, three days after Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-9). Ananias, a devout disciple

in Damascus, received a vision commanding him to minister to Saul despite knowing his reputation as a persecutor (Acts 9:10-16). The laying on of hands resulted in simultaneous healing and Spirit-filling. Paul's baptism likely occurred in one of Damascus's rivers or in a private home with a baptismal pool. This conversion became the pivotal moment in early church history, transforming Christianity's chief persecutor into its primary missionary and theologian. Paul references his conversion repeatedly in his letters and speeches (Acts 22:13-16, 26:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:8; Galatians 1:15-16; 1 Timothy 1:13-16), using it to establish apostolic authority and illustrate God's transforming grace.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of the scales falling from Paul's eyes—literal healing, spiritual metaphor, or both?
2. Why does Luke emphasize the immediate sequence of sight restoration, rising, and baptism?
3. How does Paul's baptism immediately after his conversion demonstrate early Christian practice?
4. What does Ananias's role in Paul's healing and baptism teach about the importance of the faith community?
5. How does this physical and spiritual healing demonstrate the comprehensive nature of conversion?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	εὐθέως	ἀπέπεσον	ἀπὸ	τῶν	ὀφθαλμῶν	αὐτοῦ	ὥσεὶ
And	immediately	there fell	from	G3588	eyes	his	as
G2532	G2112	G634	G575		G3788	G846	G5616
λεπίδες	ἀνέβλεψέν	τε	παραχρῆμα,	καὶ	ἀναστὰς		
it had been scales	and he received sight	and	forthwith	And	arose		
G3013	G308	G5037	G3916	G2532	G450		
ἐβαπτίσθη							
was baptized							
G907							

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 3:14 (Parallel theme): But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

Acts 22:16 (Baptism): And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Acts 2:38 (Baptism): Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.